



Family Time in '95

Yule Wishes

MATWATCH '94

DECEMBER 1994

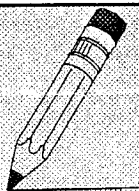
CHRISTMAS EDITION

VOL. 2, NO. 11



Steve

BEVERLY



Mr. Richie Blood
Charlotte, N.C.

Dear Master Blood:

If anything other than your gifts has made your Christmas brighter, more than likely, the reason is your father did not have to rush off to a wrestling card right after your family celebration on Christmas Day.

Your poppa made a decision to "hang it up" from the arenas and the locker rooms last month. He did so in the fashion he did many things during his ring career—quietly and outside the scope of major headlines.

I remember when your father adopted the name "Ricky Steamboat," adopting the identity as the son of Sam Steamboat, the popular Hawaiian who teamed for many of my teenage years with the great Eddie Graham. They were the stars of the ring long before you were born, but they were two of the finest.

As often happened with new performers, your father lost a lot of those early matches. So did Terry Funk back in the sixties and so did many of the young guys who broke into wrestling around the time of your father: Bob Orton Jr., Steve Keirn, Dick Slater—most of them lost a lot more than they won before they became the coming stars of the 1970s.

But your father had a popularity with the crowd which he earned with his ring skills. In his early years, he developed an enormous skill as a tag team wrestler. When your father journeyed to the Carolinas, he found success when the promoters paired him with Paul Jones, Ric Flair and Jay Youngblood. Four times he shared the world tag team title with Youngblood. Their feud with Sgt. Slaughter and Don Kernodle was a legendary one with the NWA world tag team belts changing hands four times. Long will I remember the day when my teenage heroes, Jack and Jerry Brisco, subtly turned heel after a match on *Mid-Atlantic Championship Wrestling* against your father and Youngblood. The pure wrestling skill in that series was among the classiest ever seen in a ring.

At the end of 1983, Youngblood left the Carolinas, as did the Briscos. The wrestling business was about to change in a dramatic fashion. Your father was ready to step to the forefront as a singles star. When Ricky Steamboat became the U.S. heavyweight champion, he was regarded as

(Continued on Page 2)

O kay, we're late. And we humbly apologize. But things have been dramatically changing.

We have not abandoned nor neglected our loyal readers. However, as so many of you know, Rebecca and I have been in the midst of an extended quest for adoption—which we have learned has become one of the most difficult endeavors in America.

However, we have finally learned in the most recent days of a possibility to adopt two little girls, sisters who have been in foster care on a farm over the last four years. While many questions are yet to be resolved, the signs are positively pointing to a family for us in 1995.

At some point in one's life, something is much more important than pro wrestling and this is assuredly one. And this could not have been a more anticipated Christmas present.

We know in the past year, many of you have experienced many moments of enthusiasm and, as well, sorrows. Yet, our hopes for all of you are for an extraordinary Christmas, or Hanukkah for our Jewish friends....and with that, a prayer for the New Year to be filled with as much anticipation as we have in our home.

As usual, we have a bit more amity in our Christmas edition of *Matwatch '94*. While we will still have some pointed editorials, we will be sensitive to the season of Peace on Earth.

Our prayers are with our entire readership, both those who pay and those who scan bootleg copies, for the spirit of this season to remain with you through the whole of next year. And may the birth of the Christ child be a focal point for a kindling of moral strength which can touch every family and every fiber of our nation.

Steve Beverly

(Continued from Page 1)

the sizzle in the steak of what had become the most successful of the old NWA territories. Yet, your father still did not have a national platform. The World Wrestling Federation was just in its birthing pains of national expansion; WTBS in Atlanta, the nation's Superstation, still focused on the Atlanta-based World Championship circuit.

Four years before you were born, your father and Flair delivered what is still considered a classic in a main event at the New Jersey Meadowlands, designed to kick some fear into Vince McMahon's incursion onto the old NWA grounds. Yet, their best was still to come.

In 1985, shortly after losing the U.S. heavyweight title to Wahoo McDaniel and making a semi-farewell tour of the Carolinas with a series against Flair, your father jumped to the World Wrestling Federation, shocking traditional NWA viewers when they saw him suddenly appear on a Saturday studio edition of the WWF Atlanta show on WTBS. The purists, particularly those from the Carolinas and Virginia, hated to see him go because they cringed at what McMahon had "done" to wrestling.

He became "The Dragon" and that was a bit much for his long-time followers. Yet, Ricky Steamboat never gave less than a professional performance amidst the caricatures of the WWF. His battles with Randy Savage in 1986-87 were classics and their bout before the storied Pontiac Silverdome *Wrestlemania III* crowd was still the wrestling highlight of that show. Yet, many of us winced again only weeks later when your dad was forced to give up the belt on weekly TV to The Honky Tonk Man. Were this legitimate competition, we knew that could never have happened.

Your father took some time off around the time of your birth. A time which extended into months. He came back to the WWF for one match, in the *Wrestlemania IV* WWF heavyweight title tournament. He brought you to the ring in the "Little Dragon" outfit. The fans at Atlantic City were courteous.

Nine months later, your father would make a dramatic "back-where-he-belongs" return to the NWA with a tag team pinfall over Flair on *World Championship Wrestling*. The comeback was the shot in the arm WCW needed to launch Ted Turner's ownership.

Wrestling fans who call themselves hardcores still argue over this question but I still believe the championship match between your father and Flair in Chicago in February 1989 was the finest I ever witnessed—and I saw many of the spectacular Jack Brisco-Dory Funk Jr. bouts of the '60s and '70s.

A better series of matches has never existed than those between your father and Flair. As some people say about coaches or athletes, they "put on a clinic."

Unfortunately, your dad was booed by a number of fans during the Flair series. In his interviews, Ricky Steamboat proclaimed the virtue of the family unit, positive values and what in years past would have been the ideal contrast to the lifestyle of Ric Flair's wrestling character. But wrestling fans had undergone a substantial change in the '80s. They did not automatically cheer for whom the promoters wanted them to cheer and they often booed the fan favorites.

To a degree, the fan behavior during Steamboat-Flair series (and you may not genuinely understand this until you're older) brought out the worst qualities in many of those who bought tickets to see it—and served as a bizarre social comment on how parts of society had become distorted in its perspective as to what a hero is. The absolute low point came the night your father won the title belt from Flair. He called for you to be brought to the ring and a vocal element of that Chicago crowd booed. They didn't boo you, Richie. They were booing the image of a family man. A significant number of people who read wrestling newsletters would say, "Oh, it's just wrestling and if people buy a ticket, they can cheer or boo whomever they want." That's true. But I wondered that night *why* they were choosing to boo a man who was endorsing healthy values and merely wanted to share the celebration with his son. I don't know what that said about us.

(Continued on next column)

'RAW' Makes It 34 OF 35 FOR NIELSEN

NEW YORK—After a brief snap of a 29-week winning streak in the Nielsen ratings, *Monday Night Raw* has returned to the top for five consecutive weeks.

For the week ending Dec. 12, *Raw* scored a 2.7 rating and 3.9 per cent share to lead cable mat shows for the 34th time in 35 weeks.

WCW *Saturday Night* tallied a 2.1/4.0 to finish as runner-up. WWF *Action Zone* tied its second-best numbers with a 2.0/5.0, WCW *Pro* rolled over a million homes for the first time in four months with a 1.7/6.3 and WWF *Mania* scored a 1.6/5.0.

For the week ending Dec. 5, *Raw* delivered a 3.3/4.7, its top rating since the final week Jim Ross hosted the show during the summer.

WCW *Saturday Night*, in a Dec. 3 live outing, was boosted to a 2.6/5.1. *Action Zone* nosed by WCW *Main Event* in the Sunday afternoon race with a 1.9/5.0 to a 1.8/3.1.

The morning battle went to *Mania* with a 1.5/4.9 to a 1.4/5.5 for *Pro*. A complete rundown on the November ratings and averages is on *The Ratings Page* later in this issue.

Steve Beverly

(Continued from left column)

Over the next five years, your father would make one more trip to the WWF, where Vince McMahon would never allow him back into the elite circle of headliners. When McMahon wanted to embarrass your father on television, he drew the line and justifiably walked away.

He came back to WCW late in 1991 at a point when the company needed another shot in the arm. He never once gave anything less than his professional best, even at times when he may have been in severe pain.

When he sustained a career-ending injury in the fall of 1994, he was rewarded by WCW by being terminated. Once again, the class he demonstrated at his profession was far above the classlessness of those for whom he worked.

Your father recently made a decision to retire from wrestling, partially because of his injuries—but largely because of you. He wants to enjoy your growing up years as a physically-healthy father. That was a Richard Blood decision, not a Ricky Steamboat decision.

I'm sure he'll be the kind of father who will encourage you to be the best you can be at whatever you want to be. Personally, I hope it's not wrestling because the security isn't that great and the world offers far more rewarding options.

However, your father was one of the few people who made watching wrestling respectable. He was a professional. He was exemplary. He is class. I only hope the future years will make his contributions appreciated as they should be.

Sincerely,

Steve Beverly



The Mattys



Veterans Share Top Matwatch Mike Honor

When Jim Ross and Lance Russell began 1994, one was retired and the other on the verge of a turbulent professional and health year. For all intents and purposes, Lance had no intention of returning to the weekly mike grind. Ross had no intention of being stricken by a sudden disease which affects the function of the facial muscles. Nor did he anticipate being on an in-and-out rollercoaster within the World Wrestling Federation.

However, before the year was up, both had risen above the pack of national and regional commentators to become the first co-winners of the Matty Award as the Outstanding Play-by-Play Announcer in the six-year history of the *Matwatch* top honor.

Ross ended the year as the prime commentator for Jim Cornette's *Smoky Mountain Wrestling* and Russell reassumed the helm of the ship he guided as emcee for more than 30 years, *USWA Championship Wrestling*.

Jim Ross

When Ross began the year, he was in the driver's seat of *WWF Wrestling Challenge*, well past his abrupt and inexplicable removal as the anchor of World Championship Wrestling shows the previous spring. Ross had called two WWF pay-per-view shows, established a syndicated *Radio WWF with Jim Ross* weekly series and offered the blow-by-blow of pay events on a network which included the Armed Forces Radio Network.

However, Ross and WWF owner Vince McMahon entered into a dispute over the "resurrection" angle involving The Undertaker (Mark Callaway) at January's *Royal Rumble* and McMahon further insisted on converting Ross into a J.R. Ewing-parody cowboy character. Ross resisted and learned what happens to employees who fail to bow to McMahon's wishes.

Only weeks after the *Rumble*, Ross suddenly felt a numbness in his face and difficulty closing one of his eyes. Movement of his facial muscles on one side was almost impossible. The man who had chalked up four of the five Mattys in the top announcer category was facing a battle far more difficult than a confrontation with McMahon or any of the WCW wrestlers he once booked.

Ross said at the time the experience was scary. "I've been a pretty healthy fellow most of my life," Ross told us in April. "Not only was this one of the few times in my life I had ever been sick, it was frustrating. The doctors give you a timetable but you don't really know when you're going to get well."

As fate would have it, McMahon decided he did not want Ross to stick around but a contract and medical settlement was reached. Ross began his rehabilitation therapy and pondered a career outside of wrestling.

One of his first decisions was to return to Atlanta, away from the tough winters of Connecticut and closer to his roots. While virtual unanimous consent from critical quarters was that the announcing quality had deteriorated at WCW, a return there was unlikely. WCW president Bill Shaw harbored a grudge because of Ross' departing a syndication sales post to which he was reassigned after being deposed from the air. Shaw also was angry over the loss of Ross's Atlanta-based radio show for a base to promote WCW.

What Ross did not count on was being recalled to Titan. In the midst of McMahon's trial on federal steroid distribution and conspiracy charges, the WWF owner signed Ross to a two-month contract to return in the dual roles as host of *Monday Night Raw* and *WWF Superstars*. With McMahon likewise suffering a deficit in announcing depth, Ross was considered a shoo-in to stay if McMahon didn't require him to return to Connecticut to live.

Still showing physical signs of the palsy, Ross demonstrated a revived energy on *Raw*. The veteran called a live WWF title match between Bret Hart and 1-2-3 Kid (Sean Waltham), which was wrestled in a classic NWA and early WCW-style. Ross delivered what many feel was his best call since the Ric Flair-

(Continued on Page 4)



The Mattys

(Continued from Page 3)

Ricky Steamboat NWA title change at *Chi-Town Rumble* in 1989. The Hart-Kid match was Ross at his finest—unrestricted in style and substance and loaded with pre-match preparation.

The three weeks Ross hosted the USA network show, *Raw* averaged a 3.2, its highest three-week mark of the year and ended with a 3.4, which has not been topped since.

But the strong ratings and solid work on *Superstars* did not earn Ross a renewal. An interview which Ross gave to a newsletter just prior to his rejoining Titan Sports appeared as Ross was returning to the air. McMahon reportedly bristled at remarks Ross made, particularly questions raised about longtime McMahon aide Pat Patterson.

Ross returned to Atlanta and focused on a Saturday and Sunday sports/talk show on WGST-AM, where he left behind the mat chat and concentrated on the NFL, baseball strike and Georgia coach Ray Goff.

But wrestling was not over. In early fall, Ross was recruited by Cornette to take over the lead role on the SMW shows. Immediately, Ross injected a new energy to the Appalachian-based series, developed a hotline and new segment, *Confrontation*. He was instrumental in Cornette toning down the racial extremes to the Gangstas tag team. More importantly, he delivered a texture to the SMW bouts reminiscent of his old Bill Watts/UWF performances.

Ross, on a private level, endured a year of upheavals. However, when he was on the air, he offered the finest wrestling had to offer at his profession. Those performances have earned him a share of his fifth Matty in six years.

Lance Russell

He has fondly been referred to as "the Don Pardo of professional wrestling." Frankly, Lance Russell was enjoying life fishing, relaxing with his wife Audrey, taking his grandchildren to Disney World and serving as a host and coordinator for The Real Wrestling Hotline.

Russell—a difficult reference for the veteran, considering how he has been "just Lance" for so many years—had rejected numerous overtures to return for guest appearances on the Memphis TV show he left in 1989 for a stint with WCW.

But when USWA events coordinator Randy Hales was assigned to develop a *Monday Night Memories* Memphis nostalgia show, Hales would not take no for an answer. Even with the eras of Sputnik Monroe, Jackie Fargo and Jerry Lawler, Lance Russell was Memphis wrestling.

Lance was inducted into the Mid-South Coliseum Wrestling Hall of Fame but was asked to return to his old homestead with Dave Brown on WMC-TV the Saturday before *Memories*.

The big roar from the channel 5 studio crowd indicated the fondness was still there. Within five minutes, the evidence was clear. Lance Russell had not missed a beat and was like a finely-aged wine. After three years of viewers and Brown enduring the painful Corey Macklin at mikeside, Lance's return was like a vaporizer opening the sinuses of a flu-ridden victim.

Monday Night Memories was a smash success and the rating for the Saturday morning show—which was headed for possible cancellation in late 1993—sent a clear message. Lance had to return on a regular basis.

The negotiations didn't take long. "I told them I'd do it as many weeks as I could in the month but I would not tie myself down to it full time," Lance said last summer. "If there's a week Aud and I want to play in a golf tournament, or take the grandkids somewhere, we're going to do it. They understand that. I told them if at any time they were unhappy or I was unhappy with the arrangement, we could part company with no hard feelings."

Hard feelings? Hardly. So far, Lance has averaged three weeks in every month, well above the two he pledged. His performance may well be underrated in other circles for one reason—he does not have the quality of heels to bounce off of his "tweaks" as so many of the legendary Memphis personalities did for years. Only Tommy Rich and young manager Scott Bowden have demonstrated the ability to reciprocate the combativeness Lance tosses their way. Not even Sid Vicious (Sid Eudy) can go toe-to-toe verbally with Lance because Sid has been schooled too closely in the WWF/WCW scripted method of interviewing.

Lance's richness of performance in his return has brought two items glaringly to the forefront: 1) how weak many of today's announcers are, including some young veterans who have been at the mike for a decade, at building a storyline and challenging heels, rather than wimpishly handing them a mike; and 2) how unschooled today's contemporary wrestler is at out-of-ring performance.

The ironic element is Lance didn't have to do it. Life was serene without a weekly TV show. But he has done what few announcers do any more—made listening to him fun. His consistency of performance and re-energizing of a mediocre USWA show earn a share of this year's Matty as Outstanding Play-by-Play Announcer. When told that and 35 cents would get him a cup of coffee at Waffle House, Lance said, "That may be true....but it's nice to be remembered, just the same."

(In next month's double issue: the complete 1994 Mattys, including several for Worst Performances).

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TO MATWATCH '94 SUBSCRIBERS

JANUARY'S edition will be a 16-page double issue to catch all subscribers back up with their orders. The issue will include the complete 1994 MATTY Awards, the MATWATCH '94 MAN of the Year, and the Top 10 News Stories of 1994.

U.S. \$5 for 3 issues INTL. \$9 for 3

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HEADLINES

Turner, NBC Merger Talks Continue

ATLANTA—Talks of potential merger between Turner Broadcasting System and NBC are intensifying, according to the Dec. 19 edition of *Electronic Media* magazine.

The magazine's financial editor, Diane Mermigas, who has been a past source of critical cable information for *Matwatch*, writes, "High level sources close to the situation say a detailed partnership arrangement could be agreed upon soon."

Complicating the deal would be how the two companies would satisfy FCC cross-ownership regulations for broadcasting and cable. However, Mermigas indicates both companies have been severely scrutinizing the profit/loss statements of all of their divisions. That issue has been confirmed by a well-placed source close to both TBS and World Championship Wrestling.

"I can tell you, every nickel of every department of WCW is being scoured with a fine-toothed comb," the source told *Matwatch* '94: "Travel expenses and personnel are under the microscope."

T.H.E. Pays Hogan Salary

ATLANTA—Inside sources close to World Championship Wrestling indicate the financial burden for Hulk Hogan's paycheck is not directly on the wrestling company.

A report in a national cable magazine shows Hogan's reported \$2 million tab (estimates vary because of complicated bonus payments) is being picked up by Turner Home Entertainment.

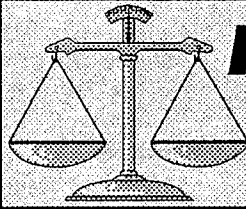
T.H.E. sources have had no comment, citing confidentiality of salary information.

Mania, Superstars Add Dish Slots

NEW YORK—WWF *Mania* and WWF *Superstars* have new or alternate feeds for satellite dish owners.

Mania now airs Fridays at 3 p.m. (ET) on Galaxy 7, channel 18. The feed has switched from a Friday morning slot.

Superstars is now available on the newest satellite superstation, WUHF (the Fox affiliate from Rochester, N.Y., Saturdays at 12 noon (ET). WUHF is on satellite Anik E2, channel 13.



MATWATCH '94 EDITORIALS

THE TIME HAS COME....

With no doubt, Paul Heyman—for all of the headaches he reportedly caused executives of every wrestling organization for which he has previously worked (and he'll personally admit to many of them)—owns one of the most perceptive minds in recent history of wrestling.

For all of his hijinks, the man is shrewd with a personal dollar, cagy in legal matters and can be totally disarming. Plus, during a serious illness of the editor of this publication, Heyman never failed to call two and three times a week to check for a progress report.

Few people can doubt Paul has exhibited an ability to book wrestling which pleases and stimulates a specific audience—namely, the rabid Philadelphia-area fans who frequent the "ECW Arena" for Tod Gordon's Extreme Championship Wrestling.

However, a candid view of the direction this company has taken brings into focus a both perplexing and disturbing perspective. ECW is being hailed in independent publications as the promotion of the '90s in the United States. But one must ask: at what cost? Whereas wrestling has always been a violent form of entertainment, the violence in ECW has been gratuitous to the extent of raising the sadist expectations of its live audiences and, to a degree, its most enthusiastic elements of its television viewership.

Serious questions have already been raised in this corner about the infamous evening when ringsiders were invited to toss their chairs into the ring—and did so. But the stakes were raised even higher when a fan handed Cactus Jack a claw hammer—ostensibly to use on an opponent—at a recent ECW show. To his credit, Mick Foley was perceptive enough to hand the hammer back.

The recent angle in which Sherri Martel, albeit in retaliation for her abandonment of Shane Douglas, was piledriven and beaten around the ring by Douglas was far more blatantly violent in the arena of men-battering-women sequences than any of the past offensive USWA situations.

Even more disturbing is the recent increase in Internet on line reports of the heavy use of alcohol among the ECW Arena fans. Several computer dispatches from the week of Dec. 19 from ticketbuyers pointing with pride to their inebriated states during the shows raises frightening questions as to the potential for seriously violent fan involvement. Without question, alcohol has been a stimulant for fan violence at mainstream sporting events. When gratuitous violence is the catalyst for fan attendance—and that is undeniably so with ECW—the law of averages suggests a potential for an interactive disaster.

Not the least of matters is how this organization is considered to be wrestling at its finest in the United States. Conversely, *Matwatch* '94 views the ECW television shows many weeks as everything *but* wrestling. Is it wrestling when the apex of enthusiasm is achieved by seeing a man reverse backflip onto a victim sprawled across a table, in an effort to break the table? We think not. When this becomes a cliché, what is the next step?

Ultimately, one has to ask what the commentary is on an audience which insanely cheers blatant brutality. To pander to that may be successful within the small universe of the Extreme group but most of what occurs in ECW would land its competitors in jail or, at the very least, therapy, were their antics legitimate.

Heyman has been successful at introducing new characters and generating talk in newsletters about his group. But the emphasis on unrelenting violence will prevent ECW from ever being mainstreamed as a legitimate national competitor. More significantly, this group appears to be on a collision course for potential liability from the combination of alcohol and violence-oriented enthusiasm of its fans. *Matwatch* '94 strongly calls on Heyman and Gordon to moderate the extremes of Extreme if: a) they want to gain acceptance by a broader element of the television industry, or b) they don't wish to see an overzealous fan take violence to the Extreme.

THE PLASTIC BAG AFFAIR II

Here we go again. Just when we anticipate Jim Cornette has finally accepted his reliance on racial extremes to get over his Gangstas tag team was misguided, we travel back to a sordid angle which once gained WCW a page-one editorial lambasting by this publication in 1989.

(Continued on page 8)

THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

Oct. Avgs.	Rtg/Shr	Homes	Year Ago	Sept.
Mon. Night Raw	2.7/3.9	1.66 mil.	2.9/4.2	2.6/3.7
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/4.9	1.35 mil.	2.1/4.4	2.1/4.8
WWF Action Zone	2.1/5.7	1.28 mil.		
WCW Main Event	1.9/3.4	1.18 mil.	1.4/3.0	1.7/3.4
WWF All-American	1.5/4.0	933,000	1.9/5.7	1.5/3.9
WCW Pro*	1.4/5.4	865,000	1.5/6.3	1.3/5.2
WWF Mania	1.3/4.0	808,000	1.2/4.0	1.2/4.1

COMBINED AVG.

WWF	1.9/4.2	1.18 mil.	2.1/4.6	1.8/4.5
WCW	1.83/4.6	1.13 mil.	1.7/4.4	1.7/4.5

Remaining Oct. Nos. Wk. Ending 10/24 Wk. Ending 10/31

Monday Night Raw	2.5/3.5	3.1/4.4
WCW Sat. Night	2.3/5.0	2.5/5.4
WWF Action Zone	2.0/5.5	2.1/5.8
WCW Main Event	1.5/2.7	2.9/3.5
WCW Pro	1.4/5.7	1.6/6.4
WWF Mania	1.2/3.8	1.9/5.9

Nov. Avgs. Rtg/Shr T. Homes Yr. Ago

Mon. Night Raw	2.7/3.9	1.68 million	2.9/4.2
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/4.8	1.38 million	2.7/5.3
WWF Action Zone	1.7/4.6	1.08 million	1.9/5.1**
WCW Main Event	1.7/3.1	1.05 million	2.1/3.4
WWF Mania	1.4/4.4	858,000	1.3/4.0
WCW Pro***	1.3/5.0	790,000	1.6/6.4**

COMBINED AVG.

WWF	1.93/4.3	1.20 million	2.07/4.6
WCW	1.73/4.3	1.07 million	2.13/5.0

Week Ending Nov. 7

WCW Sat. Night	2.9/5.8	1.79 million	2.3/4.7
Monday Night Raw	2.8/3.9	1.74 million	3.0/4.3
WCW Main Event	1.6/2.7	989,000	2.0/3.6
WWF Action Zone**	1.5/3.8	936,000	1.9/5.4
WCW Pro***	1.3/5.0	802,000	1.4/6.0
WWF Mania	1.0/3.3	622,000	1.1/2.6

COMBINED AVG.

WCW	1.93/4.5	1.19 million	1.9/4.8
WWF	1.77/3.7	1.10 million	2.0/4.1

Week Ending Nov. 14

Monday Night Raw	2.7/4.0	1.68 million	3.1/4.5
WCW Sat. Night	2.0/4.4	1.23 million	3.1/6.0
WWF Action Zone	1.8/4.9	1.12 million	2.0/5.2
WCW Main Event	1.7/3.2	1.05 million	1.9/3.6
WWF Mania	1.5/4.7	935,000	1.4/4.3
WCW Pro	1.5/5.8	926,000	1.8/7.0

COMBINED AVGS.

WWF	2.0/4.5	1.25 million	2.2/4.7
WCW	1.7/4.5	1.07 million	2.3/5.5

(Continued on Page 8)

THE NOVEMBER STORY

One cannot help but look at the November ratings and, aside from a slight upturn from the WWF morning show and a nine per cent hike in the *Clash of the Champions* numbers, viewers are increasingly turning thumbs down compared to year-ago levels of weekly mat shows. Even the flagship show of pro wrestling the past two years, *Monday Night Raw*, has finally begun to show erosion.

Raw dipped seven per cent from its strong 2.9 of November 1993, particularly suffering a 2.5 at mid-month. Even a weak New York Giants-Houston Oilers Monday night game did not help attract more viewers to USA. *WCW Saturday Night*, after the Hogan acquisition and all of its recent publicity, fell 19 per cent from a formidable 2.7/5.3 of a year ago. The 2.2 was only accomplished on the coattails of a 2.9 Nov. 5, which brought down the 29-week winning streak of *Raw* in the Nielsen's. But the WWF kingpin captured the next three weeks.

Even with a live airing on the final Sunday in the month, *WCW Main Event* fell 19 per cent as well from its year-ago level, never even managing a 2 rating during the month. The new *WWF Action Zone* was up 13 per cent over the final month averages of *All-American* but cooled substantially from its hot first two weeks. The Sunday noontime show was down 19 per cent from its October average.

The only genuine success story goes to *WWF Mania* and that is not much of one. *Mania* forged a small seven per cent increase and scored a rare victory over the quickly-declining *WCW Pro*. *Pro* appears to be a candidate for the same heap as *All-American*, at least in structure, if its numbers continue on its same track. The TBS Saturday a.m. hour fell a full 19 per cent (a familiar figure?) from the numbers of November '93.

Clearly, any public relations protestations to the contrary, neither organization can be happy with this performance—in particular, TBS, which has seen its mat subsidiary spend astronomically and register a fairly substantial drop over the last year. Without question, TBS would have registered substantially better audience performance with existing programming material.

OTHER NOTES

Jim Crockett's NWA Championship Wrestling outpointed WCW's syndicated show 1.8 to 1.2 in its first week on the air in Dallas....Crockett will not attempt to put his show on satellite in the early going....The live interactive shows have, thus far, pumped up numbers 12% on TBS but that's hardly enough to bring throngs of new viewers to the tube....The 2.1 scored by *Sunday Night Slam* was the worst pay-per-view preview show ever on USA. The numbers were off 28 per cent from last year's *Survivor Series Showdown*....The six-man (or was it five-man?) main event on *Clash of the Champions* scored a 4.5, well down from the record Hogan-Flair rating in August.

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

OPTION I

DAVE MELTZER (M-W-F)

HOTLINE OBSERVER

STEVE BEVERLY (TU-SAT)

THE WAY THINGS
OUGHT TO BE

900 MATWATCH

SCOTT HUDSON (THU)

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RON LEMIEUX (W)

PAUL MACARTHUR/
DAVE SKONICK (TH)

CRITIC-AT-LARGE (FR)

CODY BOYNS (SA)

G'ANN MAKROPOULOS (SU)



The Best of Fall

1. Buddy Landell, NWA: "You've heard a lot about so-called Nature Boys. One old one was around 40 years ago. He's dead. Another one just had to retire and he should have a long time ago. And then there's me. Need I say more?" 2. Scott Bowden, USWA, on referee Frank Morrell: "All Frank wants for Christmas is enough Huggies to make it to the bathroom for the rest of his life." 3. Lance Russell, USWA: "Scott, you keep talking and Frank will find the closest woodshed for you." 5. Bowden, USWA: "Lance, if I had to make a top 10 bad list, your suit and Dave's commentary would be close to the top." 6. Bobby Heenan, WCW Worldwide, on Diamond Doll: "That's not a dress. That's spraypaint." 7. Tony Schiavone, WCW Sat. Night: "Brain, you're the biggest troublemaker I know—and I've been married a long time." 8. Vince McMahon/Gorilla Monsoon, Survivor Series: (V) "This (Backlund) is the new WWF generation? I shudder to think." (G) "We're in trouble." 9. Bowden, USWA: "I go through money like Eddie Marlin goes through a six-pack of beer." 10. Ron Harris, USWA: "I have no respect for the female gender." 11. Bowden, USWA: "They call 'em PG-13 because that's as old as their fans get." 12. Russell, USWA: "Why don't you quit worrying about what other people say about PG-13? You might accidentally have a constructive thought." 13. McMahon, SS, on Doink & the little clowns: "This is like Benny Hill, or something." 14. Bowden, USWA: "The only difference between Ms. Texas and a bucket of scum is the bucket." 15. Jerry Lawler, WWF Superstars: "Now Bret Hart knows what Bill Clinton felt like on November 8th. I feel your pain, Bret. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

Strongest Comments

1. Mabel, USWA: "Sid (Vicious), you ain't got nothin.' You just got a steroid body." 2. Michael Hayes, NWA: "We may even come to The Omni next year—and we won't cancel because we only sell 220 tickets." 3. McMahon, SS: "The Hitman—the finest WWF champion of all-time." 4. Russell, USWA, on a Moondog battle royal: "It has nothing to do with wrestling." 5. Shane Douglas, ECW, to Sherri Martel: "You go back and tell Ric Flair he's a piece of _____. He's an old piece of _____."

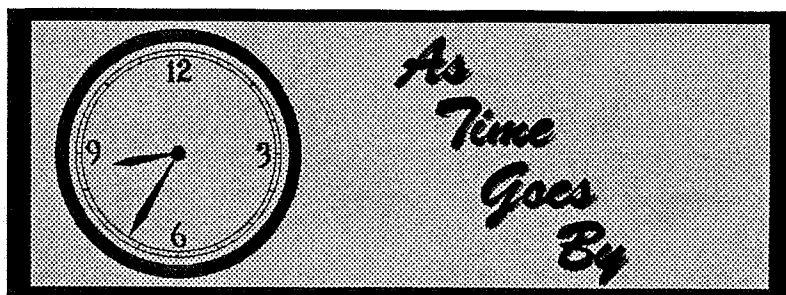
And the Rest....

ENGLISH LESSONS - 1. Frank Morrell, USWA: "I've *took* bigger pills than you, Scott Bowden." 2. Tommy Rich, USWA: "Eddie Marlin, you *ain't* never gave me nothing."

ALL-CLICHE TEAM - 1. Schiavone, WCW: "...for crying out loud" (4 times on 12/10). 2. Brian Christopher, USWA: "...bigger they are, the harder they fall." 3. Ricky Morton, SMW: "...you can't judge a book by its cover." 4. McMahon, WWF: "...close but no cigar." 5. Dave Brown, USWA: "...when the going gets tough, the tough get going."

WORST INTERVIEW OF 1994 - Spellbinder and Jim Harris (tie), USWA (11/27). Both had to improve to be bad.

BOO AWARDS - 1. New Jack, SMW, for saying, "The only reason I don't pull out a gun and shoot Ricky Morton is I'm a convicted felon." 2. SMW, for Landell plastic bag attack on Tony Anthony and later saying he was "playing God Almighty" with Anthony's life. 3. SMW, for prolonging Tammy Fytch's threats to "kill the cat in the bag" during the Boo Bradley-Cactus Jack storyline. 4. ECW, for Shane Douglas' brutal piledriver and beating of Sherri Martel. That one was enough to make the old USWA men-hitting-women angles appear tame.



The apparent self-imposed decision of Eric Bischoff to insert himself as host of all weekly live shows on TBS is one of the most idiotic decisions ever. As weak as Tony Schiavone may have been this year, to relegate him to a locker room reporter on live Saturdays is the equivalent of telling a news anchorman on Election Night to hit the streets and allowing the general manager to anchor. If Schiavone is not strong enough to host the live shows, why is he good enough to host the taped shows? But Bischoff is nothing but an egomaniacal Vince McMahon wannabe....After writing this, I'll probably read in some other publication where Missy Hyatt says what a bad person I am—but if Missy's lawsuit against TBS is to maintain any credibility, why does this woman keep going on shows like the new Tribune *Charles Perez Show* on an episode entitled, "I Could Have Sold My Body....?"

Controversy brewing over WCW's TV slot in Tampa. Reportedly, McMahon's people are howling anti-trust violations over Turner's conditions for WTVT to give WCW exclusivity on the station. But isn't that largely what McMahon did in 1984 when he bought his way onto so many local stations and demanded they kick off the local NWA promotion?...Stories are circulating WCW will now post a \$4 million loss in 1994 after the underperformance of *Halloween Havoc*. The company is now stacking up with an \$8.8 million payroll for 1995 and that does not count the \$2 million Turner Home Entertainment is said to be footing for Hulk Hogan. One remembers when Jim Herd was severely called on the carpet for his payroll reaching \$5 million.

Christmas Eve, USWA ran a special taped show, headed largely by highlights of May's *Monday Night Memories* nostalgia evening, much of which had not previously been seen....The new Game Show Network featured a 1955 rerun of *What's My Line?* Dec. 20, on which a contestant was Jeanne McLemore of Texas. Her line: she was the only woman wrestling promoter in the U.S.

Jim Crockett hoping to get a January start on Channel America with NWA and perhaps by February on American Independent Network....Sam Kent's *North Georgia Championship Wrestling* had a one-week stint on Main Street TV satellite network, which promptly pulled all wrestling from the channel.



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CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

(Continued from Page 6)

Wk. Ending Nov. 21	Rtg/Shr	T. Homes	Year Ago
Monday Night Raw	2.5/3.5	1.56 mil.	2.2/3.1
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/4.6	1.36 mil.	2.6/5.1
WCW Main Event*	1.9/3.5	1.17 mil.	2.3/3.9
WWF Action Zone	1.8/4.8	1.12 mil.	1.8/4.7***
WWF Mania	1.4/4.1	870,000	1.6/4.9
WCW Pro	1.2/4.6	740,000	1.7/6.3**

COMBINED AVG.

WWF	1.9/4.1	1.18 mil.	1.9/4.2
WCW	1.8/4.2	1.09 mil.	2.2/5.1

Wk. Ending Nov. 28	Rtg/Shr	T. Homes	Year Ago
Monday Night Raw	2.8/4.0	1.74 mil.	3.1/4.3
WWF Action Zone	1.8/5.0	1.12 mil.	1.8/5.0***
WCW Sat. Night	1.8/4.3	1.11 mil.	2.9/5.4
WWF Mania	1.6/5.4	990,000	1.6/5.4
WCW Main Event	1.6/3.0	988,000	1.9/3.5
WCW Pro	1.1/4.5	690,000	1.5/6.4**

COMBINED AVG.

WWF	2.07/4.8	1.29 mil.	2.17/4.9
WCW	1.5/3.9	926,000	2.1/5.1

SPECIAL EVENTS

Clash of the Champions (TBS)	3.6/5.4	2.23 mil.	3.3/5.0
Sun. Night Slam (USA)	2.1/3.1	1.31 mil.	2.9/4.2

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

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Matwatch Editorials

(Continued from Page 5)

Then, on the Smoky Mountain program airing the weekend of Dec. 10-11 on most of its syndicated lineup, Buddy Landell sneak-attacks Tony Anthony with a plastic bag in an angle with more graphic closeups than the excoriated Terry Funk plastic bag ambush of Ric Flair at the September 1989 *Clash of the Champions*. In that case, Funk—who originally opposed the angle—was forced to apologize on the air the next weekend and TBS programmers ordered the sequence never again to air.

That is the appropriate response for Cornette in this case. This is the kind of wrestling which goes beyond the mere "getting over" of a heel. Later in the same show, Landell—in a post-angle interview—told viewers, "I was playing God Almighty with his life."

As we see it, this is far from a storyline which generates the kind of heat to bring hundreds to an arena. This kind of creativity is what will ultimately make viewers turn off the set and station managers cancel the show. Cornette does not have such a secure station lineup that he can afford to push this kind of envelope.

Matwatch '94 believes Cornette owes a disclaimer to his audience, particularly to younger viewers, of the lethal consequences of placing a plastic bag over the face of another human being. If not, the stations carrying the Smoky Mountain series definitely do.

TWO GOLDEN CHOICES

One final time, we cannot help but add an exclamation point to the *Matty* award winners in our top category. The decision to choose between Jim Ross and Lance Russell was so difficult, we chose them both as the 1994 Outstanding Play-by-Play Announcer in wrestling.

Ironically, the year started with Lance virtually retired from the mike and Ross on the verge of an in-and-out rollercoaster with the World Wrestling Federation. However, both proved their consummate professionalism in the work they delivered during 1994.

The 'R&R Boys' have proved two things: 1) how glaring the lack of young announcing talent is throughout the industry; and 2) how stupid their former employer, World Championship Wrestling, is for letting them both get away. The prime WCW shows have never been the same since Ross' departure and Lance would be invaluable as a coach for WCW's and any organization's announcing corps, much in the same fashion as NBC employs Marty Glickman for its sports voices.

Matwatch '94 salutes this talented twosome for rising above the turbulence of, at best, a mediocre year in pro wrestling.

MATWATCH '94

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